



Cover photo: Rolf Bublitz

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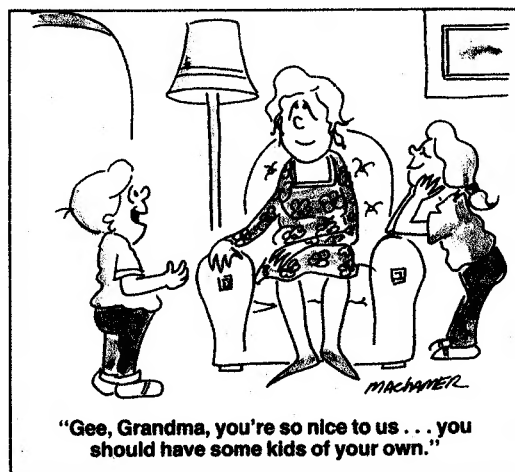
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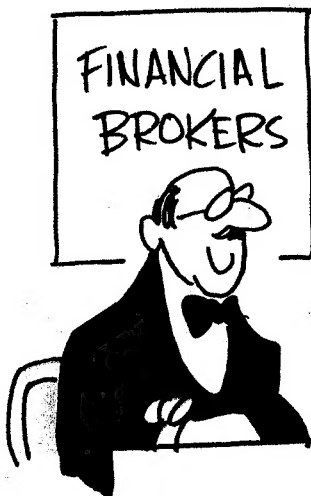
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"Gee, Grandma, you're so nice to us . . . you should have some kids of your own."



"Here, honey. I call it leftover helper."



"I'd like to share in the fun of profit-taking."

VW



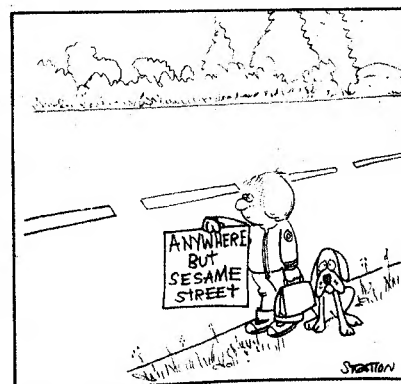
"Burt, I know we've enjoyed two successful years of marriage, but lately your ratings have dropped and I'm having to think twice about renewing your fall season."

★ Mr. and Mrs. Slattery were chiding their son Timothy for his poor grades in school. "Little Brian next door doesn't get Cs and Ds on his report card, does he?" they asked. "No, I guess he doesn't," Timothy replied, "but he has very bright parents!"

Tell Us a Joke!

★ A young man rushed into the veterinarian's office with his Great Dane. "Doctor, what'll I do? My dog chases motorcycles!" "First, calm down," advised the vet. "Many dogs chase motorcycles." "I know, I know," the owner replied, "but mine catches 'em and then buries 'em in the backyard!" —Mrs. B. Bolton, Cedar Vale, Kan.

Send us your favorite joke. We'll pay you \$10 if we print it.





by Jack Ritchie

Ralph," I said darkly, "I have always been suspicious when a very rich man has apparently taken his own life."

"Why, Henry?" I smiled grimly. "Suspicion is my business."

Nevertheless, everything seemed to be in order.

Orville Tucker, a man in his middle sixties, had been found dead on the sofa in his study at three p.m. by his housekeeper-cook, Mrs. Brewster, when she entered the room to wake him from his afternoon nap.

Tucker had a single bullet wound in his head. Beside him lay a .32 caliber revolver. Apparently, no one in the house heard the shot.

Tucker's fingerprints had been found on the gun and in his left hand he clutched a paper upon which were typed the words, "Ask Adrienne. 563-2704."

Idialed the number and found that I was talking to the United Trouble Hot Line—a service to help people in trouble. Adrienne was not on duty at the moment but would be in at seven that evening. I immediately dispatched a uniformed officer to her apartment with orders to bring her to the Tucker residence.

Ralph and I then questioned Mrs. Brewster.

"Mrs. Brewster," I asked, "do you know of any reason why Mr. Tucker might have wanted to take his own life?"

She was a large-jawed woman in her mid-fifties. "Well, he wasn't feeling too good. He had to be careful of what he ate."

"How long have you been employed by Mr. Tucker?"

"Twenty-five years, give or take a little."

"Would you happen to know who Mr. Tucker's heirs are?"

"As far as I know, there's only one. Miss Beatrice, his niece."

"Are you by any chance mentioned in Mr. Tucker's will?"

"He told me I was."

"To what extent?"

"Fifty thousand dollars, for loyal and faithful service."

I took Ralph out of earshot. "Ralph, fifty thousand

dollars is a powerful motive for murder. She could have sneaked into Tucker's den during his nap. Then, acting swiftly, she could have pressed the gun into his limp hand, forcing his finger to pull the trigger."

"What about the note, Henry?"

"Ah, yes. Why wasn't it signed?"

"Now, Henry, it wasn't exactly a suicide note, was it? Just a name and a telephone number. Why should he sign something like that?"

When Tucker's niece, Beatrice, arrived she was accompanied by a tall, somewhat shifty-eyed man.

"This is Clarence Kennicott," she said, introducing her escort.

He nodded confirmation and patted her hand.

I dislike people who pat hands and decided to incorporate him into my open-ended list of suspects.

I commenced the questioning. "Do you have any idea why your uncle might have committed suicide?"

"Well, he was in rather poor health. Didn't he leave a note or something?"

"In a way," Ralph said enigmatically. "You are your uncle's sole heir?"

"As far as I know."

Kennicott amended that. "Except for a hundred thousand dollar bequest to Dr. Rathbourne and fifty thousand to Mrs. Brewster, everything goes to Beatrice."

I regarded him narrowly. "How do you happen to know that?"

"I am Orville Tucker's executor."

Ralph drew me out of earshot again. "Well, Henry, what do you think?"

"Ralph," I said, "I am a keen judge of character. That woman could not possibly have shot her uncle."

"Why not?"

"She simply isn't the type. But take that Kennicott. He has the look of an assassin."

"For shame, Henry. You can't judge a book by its cover."

"Perhaps not, Ralph, but notice the way he fawns over Beatrice Tucker. I wouldn't be surprised if he has the fantastic idea that she will marry him as soon as the dust settles and he will be in a position to share her inheritance."

A uniformed officer now entered the room with a raven-haired woman in her twenties.

"Ah, ha," I said. "You are Adrienne?"

She nodded. "And you are Detective-Sergeant Henry S. Turnbuckle."

I had Adrienne McCullum tell her story.

"Well, Mr. Tucker phoned

me three times last week at the hot line. Only I didn't know he was Mr. Tucker then, because he wouldn't give me his last name, just his first."

She decided to give me some background. "I work at the hot line three hours every week night. For charitable reasons and for my Ph.D. thesis."

"Why was Tucker calling the hot line?"

"His health, or the lack of it. He was depressed and threatened to commit suicide, but I always managed to talk him out of it. At least until today. I repeatedly tried to get his full name so that I could get help to him, but he refused to give it."

"Did he specifically ask to speak to you?"

"Not the first time. I just

dred thousand. We've been friends since we were kids."

"Where were you between two and three this afternoon?"

He hesitated. "I was in my office. My receptionist and a half-dozen patients could verify that."

"When did you see Tucker last?"

"Thursday evening. I dropped in and we played some chess."

I addressed Adrienne. "Was Tucker's health all that he talked about?"

"Mostly. He complained about his liver, kidneys, stomach and arthritis."

Dr. Rathbourne frowned. "Are you positive about that? Tucker didn't have arthritis."

She thought it over. "Well, come to think of it he

when dwelling on Tucker's illnesses."

I had been on the verge of pointing that out.

Dr. Rathbourne frowned at Kennicott. "You have arthritis, Clarence," he said.

I expected Kennicott to point out that millions of people have arthritis, but he just shrugged.

Beatrice Tucker blinked. "What possible reason could Clarence have for killing Uncle Tucker?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but Dr. Rathbourne got there first. "I've heard rumors that Clarence is deeply in debt. Frankly, I think he murdered your uncle because he's got the wild idea that he will succeed in marrying you and sharing your estate."

Beatrice Tucker stared at Kennicott. "Good heavens, Clarence! I would never marry a man who keeps patting my hand."

Adrienne zeroed in on Kennicott. "You never thought that there was a ghost of a chance that you would have to talk to me on the phone again, much less actually see me in person. I can imagine your surprise when I walked into the room."

She said smiling grimly. "No wonder I haven't heard you say a word since I came in. Say something, anything. If you're the person who made those phone calls I'll recognize your voice."

Kennicott glared at all of us and then whipped a pen and notebook from his pocket. He scribbled on a page, tore it out and handed it to me.

It read, "I refuse to say anything until I've seen my lawyer."

Well, that did it. Among all of them they had greedily solved the case. At the moment it wasn't airtight, of course. However, now that we had a target, so to speak, we would undoubtedly dig up solid evidence.

Nevertheless my mood was far from euphoric. I sighed. "Ralph, why is life so short and the days so long?"

"Now, Henry," Ralph said. "Don't brood. You guessed that it was Kennicott from the beginning."

"Ralph, guessing and deducing are not the same thing. I would have preferred to deduce." I stared at all of them and continued, "Without interference."

"Sure, Henry. You were just outnumbered. It took all of them to solve the case."

Outnumbered? I brightened a bit. Well, yes, there was that. If I had been given just a little more time, I would certainly have solved the case in short order. ★

Dial an Alibi



Judd Plosser

happened to be on duty on that line. However, after that first session he would speak only to me."

Then Dr. Rathbourne arrived. He proved to be a round man of late middle age. He nodded to both Kennicott and Beatrice Tucker and asked me, "Orville committed suicide?"

"So it would appear. For the moment, at least. Can you tell me the general condition of Orville Tucker's health?"

Dr. Rathbourne replied with a shrug. "He had plenty of things wrong with him and he wasn't getting any younger, but he could easily have lived another ten or fifteen years."

I smiled significantly. "You are mentioned in Tucker's will?"

"Yes. He told me that he intended to leave me a hun-

mentioned arthritis only once." Now she, too, frowned and asked. "You came here Thursday evening and played chess with Tucker?"

"Yes."

"Did he leave at about eight o'clock and remain away for fifteen or twenty minutes?"

"No. We sat down about seven-thirty and played steadily until almost ten."

"Aha," Adrienne said triumphantly. "Then who made the phone call to me at the hot line at eight o'clock Thursday evening? If it wasn't Tucker Thursday night, then it certainly wasn't Tucker all the other nights, because it was the same voice."

Dr. Rathbourne rubbed his jaw. "Then this person pretending to be Tucker got careless and accidentally included his own arthritis